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Senate Meeting

Friday, April 5th, 2024

Presiding Officer: Vice President Brooks

Minute Taker: Chief Justice Zabaleta

1. **Call to Order:** Call to Order at 1:05 PM
2. **Roll Call:** Roll Call Complete at 1:06 PM
3. **Approval of Minutes from March 29th:** Motion to Approve the Minutes from March 29th by Senator Burns, Seconded by Senator Saoji
4. **Adoption of the Agenda:** Motion to Adopt the Agenda by Senator Nahata, Seconded by Senator Anson
5. **Public Comments:**
6. **New Business:**
7. Presentation by SSRC (1:00-2:15pm)
8. Motion by Director Sharma to Move into Committee of a Whole (15 minutes), Seconded by Representative Mauro
9. Sharma: I have posted all my draft endorsements on the SSRC channel, and I would like each of you to review them for the next 15 minutes. Your honest opinions on the draft endorsements are appreciated.
10. Motion by Director Sharma to Move into Committee of a Whole (35 minutes), Seconded by Representative Sivakumaran
11. Motion by Director Sharma to Move out of Committee of a Whole, Seconded by Director Galloway
12. Motion for a 5-minute Recess by Senator Burns, Seconded by Senator Augustyn
13. Back at 2:13 PM
14. Motion by Representative Torres to Add Representative Valdez, Seconded by Director Galloway
15. A Bill to Impose Budget Caps within the Finance and Funding Process
16. **Presented by Senator Augustyn**
17. Director Sharma: If an organization requests a budget of $7000 for the first time, would there be communication from F&F stating that due to this clause, we are open to approving your budget up to $5000 based, but this will conclude all future requests?
18. Senator Augustyn: No, it's not up to $5000 per request. It's up to $5000 per year. So, if they request $1000, they will still have $4000 available for future requests. This information will be communicated to everyone consistently, not just at the beginning of the year, but also throughout their training.
19. Director Sharma: If you do receive a request for $7000, despite their awareness of the rules and regulations outlined in the guidelines, what would you do in that situation?
20. Senator Augustyn: Under the guidelines, any request exceeding $5000 would be automatically denied. You are welcome to resubmit a request for an amount under $5000. For instance, if you've already made several requests totaling up to $4900 this year, and you want to request an additional $200, resulting in a total of $5100, it would also be denied.
21. Director Sharma: Since you allocate $100 to every organization, would the $5000 include that $100, or would it be in addition to it?
22. Senator Augustyn: No, I won't be implementing that approach because I need to make a different method to provide leeway for student organizations. Although the experiment showed the needs of student organizations, we won't be repeating it for now. Next year, there might be interest in revisiting it. However, for the upcoming year, there won't be the $100 allocation; instead, everyone will be capped at $5000.
23. Representative Torres: The bill makes me slightly uncomfortable because in theory, it's a sound decision. However, why wasn't it implemented sooner? Warning signs emerged when we passed 7029 and approved DLR's large proposal earlier in the year, affecting our budget. Even on October 6th, the minutes show concern about allocating a tenth of our budget to them, yet we still unanimously passed it. Why wasn't this idea proposed or acted upon earlier? Another point worth noting is that the bill is proposed by two graduating Senate members who won't be affected by this change. I believe we shouldn't impose expectations on future SGA's that we haven't consistently followed ourselves. The next administration should decide how to handle the budget and whether to reintroduce this bill. We can't predict how our budget will be spent or how student organizations will interact with us regarding funding. It feels like this bill was proposed too late, especially since we only have one Senate session left.
24. Augustyn: Regarding comments about not addressing this earlier, on October 3rd, I hadn't heard anything about budget caps in my three years on this committee. It simply wasn't a concept within our committee before. Despite allocating $10,000 to student organizations, only $4200 was spent, with $6000 returning to the SGA and being redistributed to student groups. Additionally, the $2200 spent by over 70 student organizations was offset by the savings from my conference legislation, amounting to thousands of dollars. Considering our budget was $72,000, $4000 isn’t a lot, especially with the additional 60% returned. This bill was a collaborative effort between the Committee and the President, we crafted it together last Friday, with input from Lance as well. Implementing budget caps earlier in the year wouldn't have been fair. However, that doesn't mean it can't happen now. Contrary to the idea that we can't predict expenses for next year, as a senator on finance and funding for three years, I can anticipate the major expenses, like the Asian Student Association's spring formal and lunar New Year event. We set the budget cap at $5000 to avoid stifling large events while ensuring our budget lasts longer.
25. Representative Mauro: I can see the benefits of such a bill, especially for larger budgets that deplete our allocation amount. Do you have the numbers on how many requests have exceeded $5000 and how much we would have saved if we had this in place for the entire academic year?
26. Senator Augustyn: I don't have that information readily available. However, I can tell you that we've only had two proposals come to Senate, and both were around $5000. The key point to note is that anything above $5000 for the academic year would be denied. For instance, the film club's request would have been capped at $5000, saving us $5000. One issue with my legislation is that we'll need to reduce the number of presentations to Senate. Unfortunately, due to the number of bills I've been working on this week, I didn't have time to address this, but it will be adjusted to $2500 next week. I just wanted to be transparent about that.
27. Representative Valdez: Having a limit is crucial, and it's something we've had before. If we had introduced it earlier in the semester, it wouldn't have been fair to enforce it for this academic year. It's not even standard practice outside the academic world. It would have been unfair and impractical. We had to go through this experience to learn from it. As a Senate, we all share responsibility for what happened with the funds, not just F&F. While we can predict some student organization activities, we can't foresee everything. Is there a way to include a provision where, if there's extra funding, students could request amounts over $5000 with the discretion of finance and funding?
28. Senator Augustyn: I would be open for that friendly amendment. If there was ever a surplus, that should be spent by the students, and it would incentivize them to use that before the end of the year.
29. President Combs: I'd like to provide some additional context regarding the remarks made. This year is truly unprecedented in the history of our university. In the past 50 years, we've never had Policy 7029; it was always limited to registered student organizations. So, we find ourselves in a completely new territory regarding funding through SGA. When I discussed this with F&F, Lance mentioned that there were caps in the past, and given the introduction of Policy 7029, which allows all student organizations to seek funding from us without an increase in budget, it seemed prudent to reconsider implementing caps. With more student organizations to accommodate, having a cap ensures equitable distribution of funds.
30. Ex officio Spray: I reviewed all approved requests from fall 2023 to spring 2024. There was one request from a single group that exceeded the $5000 cap. I identified two other groups whose total requests for the year significantly surpassed the cap, with several others coming close. The film group received a total of $10,212 just this year alone, which means $5000 could have been allocated to another group. Denver Lynx Radio was the only group to exceed $5000 in a single request.
31. Representative Torres: I just want to clarify that my concerns weren't directed against anything specific, I haven't attended any F&F meetings, and I haven't seen the full scope of it. I was concerned about why this decision was made, not because of any specific issues, but rather due to our previous concerns earlier in the semester regarding significant reductions in our budget and the timing of the legislation
32. President Combs: At the beginning of October, it wouldn't have been fair to introduce something like this when we were already halfway through the semester and a quarter of the way through the academic year. That's part of the reasoning behind why we didn't discuss it earlier in the year. We were thrown into this new fiscal situation without knowing how it would play out. However, by putting this in place now, we're setting up next year's F&F in case funding looks similar. In my three years in student government, I've noticed that as we come back from COVID, more student organizations are realizing they can get funding from SGA, especially with the recent policy change allowing funding for any registered student organization. Hopefully, this will lead to equitable guidelines for everyone.
33. Ex officio Glunz: Adding to Juju, groups impacted by a 5K limit this year would have been Asian Student Association, Doctoral Students of Color, Denver Lynx Radio, Marketing Club, and Filmmaking Club.
34. Chief Justice Zabaleta: I noticed that Cade is sponsoring the bill, however, Cade is not allowed to sponsor bills. This can be corrected through a friendly amendment, by adding another senator as a sponsor. We just need to ensure that a voting member sponsors the bill.
35. Senator Burns: It's understandable to question why we're addressing this now, and perhaps our ex officios from student life could provide further insight. We should also consider how this might impact on the training of student organizations in preparing their funding requests. While it might seem more appropriate to leave this decision to the next SGA body, I believe it's still important to vote on this bill now if we believe it's the right thing to do. Strengthening F&F and improving communication and service to our student organizations are important considerations. Despite preempting future decisions of SGA representatives, we must prioritize our constituents and ensure clear communication about current and future roles. It may not be fair to have our first Senate pass this bill without considering the implications for student life's training efforts.
36. Senator Augustyn: The reason for presenting this before the end of the year is because, having attended training for the past two years, I know Dylan can't be expected to do a lot of work over the summer, we're not supposed to be working during that time. Also, by the first week of the first Senate, we're already starting to review budget requests; they're already coming in, so the time is now. Doing this now benefits the committee because it allows us to focus on other matters during our training time. There are numerous issues for F&F beyond just budget caps, I need them to concentrate on setting recommendations and guidelines for budgets. There's a lot to work through, and I don't want them to have to revisit this later.
37. Ex officio Spray: I'm going to share an Excel document in the general channel containing all 139 approved requests from F&F. This year, we had over 130 organizations, and I've received 2 registrations just this week. With the policy change, it opened funding for more people, so implementing this cap provides everyone with the opportunity to access those funds. There's a pressing need for these funds to be available for groups. Regarding the training plan, our student org team will be working on a complete revamp over the summer to enhance effectiveness. We need this information as soon as possible, by addressing this now, we'll have everything in place over the summer when you're not present, and the ex officios can focus on training preparation for all student organization officers.
38. Representative Gebremariam: Considering the anticipated increase in student organization registrations, are you considering the trend in registrations between the 2021-2022 academic year and the 2023-2024 academic year when determining the cap amount?
39. Senator Augustyn: I haven't noticed a drastic increase in the number of newly registered organizations. While it's growing this year, it's not as significant as the impact of policy number 7029. There are already financial provisions in place for new student organizations, such as the new student org grant, to provide additional resources for these additional groups. I believe this will address some of the concerns for next year. For next year, I'm confident that we won't face an overwhelming burden from these new organizations because of these financial measures.
40. Ex officio Spray: I have data from the last three years, and the numbers aren't significantly different. The key aspect to consider is who has access to those funds, as most of our organizations have been affiliated groups. In 2020-2021, there were 119 groups. In 2021-2022, there were 118. From 2022 to 2023, there were 137, and this year, the number is approaching around 140 with new registrations. This year, 140 groups have access to all those funds, whereas in the past three years, they did not.
41. Senator Anson: I'd like to provide some clarification as another member of the committee. This bill's timing reflects our experiences this year. We've seen several bills pass through this semester, testing out how we can extend our funds, and it has worked quite well. This bill aims to continue that trend, especially as we anticipate more organizations requesting funds now that they have access to them and are becoming aware of it. We extensively discussed this as a committee and worked with student life members and President Combs to ensure its effectiveness. As someone who hopes to remain involved in SGA, I see this as something we can reflect upon, and if necessary, adjust through further legislation.
42. Motion by Senator Anson to Extend Senate Time by 15 minutes, Seconded by Senator Augustyn
43. Friendly Amendment by Senator Anson to add “Any request that has collaborations between student orgs will have the approved amount split evenly across each of their organizations budget limit, accepted by Senator Augustyn
44. Vote of affirmation: 18-0-0
45. Senator Augustyn: This amendment prevents a scenario where multiple organizations could each request $5000 for the same event, which often occurs with collaborative efforts. This amendment ensures fairness and prevents any event from monopolizing a large portion of the budget, regardless of the number of organizations involved. It prevents student organizations from collectively requesting more than $5000 for the same event.
46. Friendly Amendment by Senator Augustyn to Change the sponsorship to Vice Chair Anson
47. Vote of Affirmation: 17-0-0
48. Friendly Amendment by Representative Valdez to add “In the event that there is a surplus of funds that is not able to be used by the end of the academic year, the Finance and Funding Committee can lift the budget cap in April to allow student organizations who have reached the cap to make requests for additional funding,” accepted by Senator Augustyn
49. Vote of Affirmation: 17-0-0
50. Ex officio Spray: Student life is currently collaborating with the Student Org team to develop a bulk purchasing program. So that organizations don’t have to request napkins, plates, cups, silverware, stuff like that. That is going to save a lot of money for F&F because things will already be purchased for our groups.
51. Motion by Senator Burns to Vote on the Bill, Seconded by Representative Mauro
52. Roll Call Vote: 17-0-0
53. The bill Passed
54. A Bill to Reduce Potential Conflicts of Interest within the Finance and Funding Budget Process
55. **Presented by Senator Augustyn**
56. Motion by Senator Agarwal to change the sponsorship of the bill to Senator Anson, Seconded by Director Sharma
57. Vote of Affirmation: 17-0-0
58. Motion by Senator Burns to Extend Senate Time by 15 minutes, Seconded by Senator Augustyn
59. Motion by Senator Nahata to Vote on the Legislation, Seconded by Senator Augustyn
60. Roll Call Vote: 16-0-0
61. The Bill Passed
62. **Updates:** 
    1. President
    2. Vice President
    3. Chief of Staff
    4. Civics
    5. College Council
    6. Public Relations
    7. Finance & Funding
    8. Judicial
    9. SACAB
    10. SSRC
    11. Ex Officio
63. **General Business from the Floor:**
64. Senator Burns: Victoria Watson is exploring a potential partnership with the National Health Survey conducted by the Wellness Center. I recommend taking the survey if you can. Victoria has offered to share the results with us, so we could have some actionable health results for future SGAs. This is my final Senate, I'm grateful for the friendships and colleagues I've gained during my time here.
65. President Combs: Next week is our last official Senate. Remember, Senate starts at 10:00 AM. Hopefully we have legislation out by Tuesday at the end of the day so that everybody has plenty of time to review whatever's there. Please make sure that when we put out the legislation that you take good amount of time to detail, read it, any notes, and questions that you may have from it. I would like for everybody to please be engaged next week, there are a lot of pieces of Legislation on there and I want to hear everybody's perspective on the things that come on this floor.
66. **Adjournment:** Motion to Adjourn by Senator Augustyn, Seconded by Senator Halember
67. At 3:18 PM